

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05
SCS-03 SCA-01 PC-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 COME-00 OC-06 CCO-00
/089 W

-----311446Z 123382 /47

O P 311404Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4747

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 0364

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SL

SUBJ: POLITICAL TENSION IN SIERRA LEONE

1. SUMMARY. FREETOWN IS FILLED WITH POLITICAL TENSION.
MAJOR ANTI-STEVENSONS DEMONSTRATION AT UNIVERSITY JANUARY 29
HAS CAUSED FIRM GOSL REACTION. GOSL SPONSORED ANTI-
UNIVERSITY DEMONSTRATION CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE. IMPLICA-
TIONS OF FUTURE ARE UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES AT UNIVERSITY OF
SIERRA LEONE JANUARY 29, OVER ONE HUNDRED STUDENTS INTERRUPTED
ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT STEVENSON SHOUTING SLOGANS AND CARRYING
PLACARDS MOSTLY DIRECTED AT STEVENSON PERSONALLY. GIST OF
MESSAGE WAS THAT STUDENTS CONSIDERED STEVENSON A THIEF, ANXIOUS
TO BUILD UP HIS OWN PERSONAL FORTUNES AT THE EXPENSE OF THE
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SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE, AND URGED HIM TO RESIGN. STEVENSON AND
GOSL SEEMED SURPRISED BY OBVIOUSLY WELL ORGANIZED DEMONSTRATION,
AND LACK OF POLICE PRESENCE NOTICED BY ALL.

3. AFTER COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES, ALL LEADING GOSL OFFICIALS
MET IN STEVENSONS' RESIDENCE AND DECIDED ON STILL UNKNOWN COURSE
OF ACTION. ACTION INCLUDED THE ORGANIZATION OF A COUNTER

DEMONSTRATION MORNING JANUARY 31. SCHOOLS AND MARKETS WERE CLOSED, WITH PETTY TRADERS BEING TOLD TO REPORT TO SINGLE DOWNTOWN LOCATION WITHOUT BEING TOLD WHY. PARAMOUNT CHIEFS AND PARTY SUPPORTERS FROM OUTSIDE OF FREETOWN AS WELL AS PARTY THUGS FROM FREETOWN WERE MOBILIZED AND BROUGHT TOGETHER EARLY MORNING JANUARY 31. DURING NIGHT JANUARY 30 APC YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS PREPARED PLACARDS FOR THE DEMONSTRATION. DEMONSTRATION'S CHIEF TARGET APPEARS TO BE THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS STUDENTS IN GENERAL AS WELL AS A FEW SPECIFIC LECTURERS. WE UNDERSTAND UNIVERSITY HAS CLOSED, BUT WE ARE UNSURE WHETHER THIS IS TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT MEASURE. INDICATIONS ARE THAT FIGHTING IS TAKING PLACE AT PRESENT TIME AMONG DEMONSTRATORS AND UNKNOWN OTHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY.

4. DEMONSTRATION LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO THE DOWNTOWN AREA FOLLOWING PATH THAT MAY PASS IN FRONT OF THIS EMBASSY AND OTHERS AS WELL. WE HAVE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS INCLUDING NOTIFICATION OF COMMISSIONER OF POLICE WHO HAS POSTED POLICE OUTSIDE OF EMBASSY. WE ESTIMATE THREAT TO US CITIZENS AND PROPERTY MINIMAL. ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HAVE DEMONSTRATION GO TO STATE HOUSE TO URGE STEVENS TO CONTINUE HIS POLICIES AND STAY AS LEADER OF SIERRA LEONE.

5. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING UNHAPPINESS IN SIERRA LEONE AS RESULT OF STEVENS' PERSONAL VENALITY AND APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE PROJECTS OF QUESTIONABLE ECONOMIC MERIT AT THE EXPENSE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. COINCIDENTALLY, ON JANUARY 28, GOVERNOR OF BANK OF SIERRA LEONE DELIVERED CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS ANNUAL SPEECH ON THE SL ECONOMY (SEE SEPTTEL). SPEECH WAS FORTHRIGHT CRITIQUE OF GOSL'S MISMANAGEMENT AND SOUNDED EXTREMELY DOOR NOTE ON GOSL ECONOMIC SITUATION. MORE OR LESS AT SAME TIME, GOSL ANNOUNCED INCREASED DUTIES ON FUEL, CIGARETTES, SOFT DRINKS, BEER, WHISKEY, AND A FEW OTHER ITEMS, AND THE VICE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT GOSL EXPENDITURE WILL BE REDUCED BY 15 PERCENT. SIMILARLY NO IMPORT LICENSES HAVE BEEN GRANTED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR.

6. THIS IS THE FIRST PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION IN SIERRA LEONE AGAINST STEVENS OR HIS GOVERNMENT SINCE HE CAME TO POWER IN 1969. GOSL LEADERS OBVIOUSLY RECALL THAT FALL OF PRIME MINISTER SIR ALBERT MARGAI IN 1967 FOLLOWED BY LESS THAN A YEAR SIMILAR DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST HIM AT THE UNIVERSITY; THEY DETERMINED TO AVOID SIMILAR FATE. IT APPEARS FOR TIME BEING THAT GOSL LEADERSHIP STANDS UNITED IN CURRENT HARD LINE REACTION TO DEMONSTRATION, BUT INDICATIONS OF FISSURES AMONG LEADING PERSONALITIES DO EXIST. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR SITUATION CLOSELY AND PROVIDE REPORTS AS APPROPRIATE. END

COMMENT.

SAMUELS

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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